

A D V I C E

T O

LYING-IN WOMEN,

ON THE

C U S T O M

O F

DRAWING THE BREASTS.

BY C. CRUTTWELL,

SURGEON, AT BATH.

S E C O N D E D I T I O N.

BATH: PRINTED BY R. CRUTTWELL:

AND SOLD BY

E. AND C. DILLY, POULTRY; AND G. KEARSLEY, FLEET-STREET, LONDON;

AND BY ALL THE BOOKSELLERS IN BATH.

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210 211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259 260 261 262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270 271 272 273 274 275 276 277 278 279 280 281 282 283 284 285 286 287 288 289 290 291 292 293 294 295 296 297 298 299 300 301 302 303 304 305 306 307 308 309 310 311 312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320 321 322 323 324 325 326 327 328 329 330 331 332 333 334 335 336 337 338 339 340 341 342 343 344 345 346 347 348 349 350 351 352 353 354 355 356 357 358 359 360 361 362 363 364 365 366 367 368 369 370 371 372 373 374 375 376 377 378 379 380 381 382 383 384 385 386 387 388 389 390 391 392 393 394 395 396 397 398 399 400 401 402 403 404 405 406 407 408 409 410 411 412 413 414 415 416 417 418 419 420 421 422 423 424 425 426 427 428 429 430 431 432 433 434 435 436 437 438 439 440 441 442 443 444 445 446 447 448 449 450 451 452 453 454 455 456 457 458 459 460 461 462 463 464 465 466 467 468 469 470 471 472 473 474 475 476 477 478 479 480 481 482 483 484 485 486 487 488 489 490 491 492 493 494 495 496 497 498 499 500 501 502 503 504 505 506 507 508 509 510 511 512 513 514 515 516 517 518 519 520 521 522 523 524 525 526 527 528 529 530 531 532 533 534 535 536 537 538 539 540 541 542 543 544 545 546 547 548 549 550 551 552 553 554 555 556 557 558 559 560 561 562 563 564 565 566 567 568 569 570 571 572 573 574 575 576 577 578 579 580 581 582 583 584 585 586 587 588 589 590 591 592 593 594 595 596 597 598 599 600 601 602 603 604 605 606 607 608 609 610 611 612 613 614 615 616 617 618 619 620 621 622 623 624 625 626 627 628 629 630 631 632 633 634 635 636 637 638 639 640 641 642 643 644 645 646 647 648 649 650 651 652 653 654 655 656 657 658 659 660 661 662 663 664 665 666 667 668 669 670 671 672 673 674 675 676 677 678 679 680 681 682 683 684 685 686 687 688 689 690 691 692 693 694 695 696 697 698 699 700 701 702 703 704 705 706 707 708 709 710 711 712 713 714 715 716 717 718 719 720 721 722 723 724 725 726 727 728 729 730 731 732 733 734 735 736 737 738 739 740 741 742 743 744 745 746 747 748 749 750 751 752 753 754 755 756 757 758 759 760 761 762 763 764 765 766 767 768 769 770 771 772 773 774 775 776 777 778 779 780 781 782 783 784 785 786 787 788 789 790 791 792 793 794 795 796 797 798 799 800 801 802 803 804 805 806 807 808 809 810 811 812 813 814 815 816 817 818 819 820 821 822 823 824 825 826 827 828 829 830 831 832 833 834 835 836 837 838 839 840 841 842 843 844 845 846 847 848 849 850 851 852 853 854 855 856 857 858 859 860 861 862 863 864 865 866 867 868 869 870 871 872 873 874 875 876 877 878 879 880 881 882 883 884 885 886 887 888 889 890 891 892 893 894 895 896 897 898 899 900 901 902 903 904 905 906 907 908 909 910 911 912 913 914 915 916 917 918 919 920 921 922 923 924 925 926 927 928 929 930 931 932 933 934 935 936 937 938 939 940 941 942 943 944 945 946 947 948 949 950 951 952 953 954 955 956 957 958 959 960 961 962 963 964 965 966 967 968 969 970 971 972 973 974 975 976 977 978 979 980 981 982 983 984 985 986 987 988 989 990 991 992 993 994 995 996 997 998 999 1000 1001 1002 1003 1004 1005 1006 1007 1008 1009 1010 1011 1012 1013 1014 1015 1016 1017 1018 1019 1020 1021 1022 1023 1024 1025 1026 1027 1028 1029 1030 1031 1032 1033 1034 1035 1036 1037 1038 1039 1040 1041 1042 1043 1

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P R E F A C E.

TO encounter a practice founded on prejudice is not, I conceive, an unjustifiable undertaking. The present age is furnished with men of too liberal sentiments to oppose an opinion merely because it is novel, or not warranted by general approbation or consent. Different systems in physic have had their different æras, and are continually yielding place to new ones; but I believe it will be acknowledged, that the most natural is generally the most lasting. Custom is a very powerful argument in defence of any practice; but surely it is not sufficient to preclude all alteration and improvement: I am well aware that the custom of employing other means than the child, to draw the breasts after delivery, is recommended and encouraged by men of eminence, and abilities far superior to my own; and the very respectable names of BUCHAN and WHITE appear as advocates in its behalf. These are gentlemen for whom I entertain the highest respect; but I have seen, or at least think I have seen, so much mischief from its use, that I could not subscribe my consent to their opinion. I have attacked a practice which I thought wrong, and I plead my own experience as an advocate in my behalf: I always considered drawing the breasts to be unnatural, indelicate, painful, and dangerous;—unnatural, as applying

plying a different agent than what nature designed;—indicate, as a disease might be thus conveyed of an alarming nature;—painful, as sensible to the patient;—and dangerous, in its consequences.—And the omission I have ever hitherto found safe, natural, and easy.

If I differ in opinion from gentlemen of known abilities, I hope they will excuse it;—if I am wrong, though the delusion has been pleasing, I shall be obliged to any gentleman candidly to point out my errors, and I will readily retract them.

These thoughts were originally written for the use of my patients, in such a manner as I thought would render them best understood by those for whom only they were designed: I did not at first intend to print them, till I found a few copies, hastily and incorrectly written, had been distributed abroad; this induced me to publish, as I was not willing to appear with more faults than I deserved, or be answerable for errors not my own.

ADVICE

ADVICE to LYING-IN WOMEN.

SECTION I.

Description and Use of the Breasts.

THE breasts are two glandular bodies, placed on the sides of the thorax, in a most proper situation for the purpose of giving food to the infant. Their size as well as figure differs in different women, constitutions, and ages: in old and very young women, they are considerably less elevated than from the first state of womanhood to the advance of age; in very young, they have not attained prominence; in age, they have lost it, and from the inelasticity of the skin then appear wrinkled and flabby. In the advance of pregnancy they grow larger, and after delivery become distended with milk, for the secretion of which they were originally designed. The size of the breast at this time generally is in proportion to the quantity of milk secreted; sometimes the quality and consistence make a difference, for when the milk is thin, the breasts will not be so turgid, as when the milk is thicker. Thus

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then the breasts are appropriated to the purpose of secretion, and the liquor so secreted is by nature intended for the great and good purpose of nourishing mankind in their infant state; and they generally afford a sufficient supply for that purpose, until the child is able to enjoy and digest a food of a different kind.

S E C T. II.

Secretion of the Milk.

THE milk is separated from the blood by the glands of the breast; and the surplus, not used, or not proper for the purpose, is carried back into the circulation again.

This secretion is performed only when wanted for the purpose of suckling, some times before, at other not till after the delivery; and though strange stories may be told of milk being found in the breasts of virgins, I have no business to disprove their existence, or alter my opinion. A fluid is often found in the breasts of new-born children.

Milk, indeed, is little more than blood changing its colour, and being secreted almost as soon as the chyle comes
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into it, the whiteness is probably accounted for, as well as several other phenomena, which would else appear strange. Great hæmorrhages will lessen the quantity of milk, and sometimes totally prevent secretion.

If a nurse who suckles should, after long fasting, when her breasts are exhausted of milk and appear flaccid, take any noxious food, or drink any intoxicating liquor, and soon after give the child the breast, the infant is sure to suffer; but if she wait eight or ten hours before she gives suck, the milk will be wholesome enough.—On the other hand, if the breasts are full, the mother may safely take a glass of wine or ale, as the milk then taken by the child is not the produce of the present food, but of the food taken before; from hence it appears reasonable, that the best method of encountering the diseases of children is to give medicines by the mouth of the mother.

It is exceedingly wonderful to observe how fast the milk is secreted into the breast; for if a woman who gives suck, and had fasted some time, so as to empty her breasts of milk, were to drink a draught or two of thin liquor, she would quickly find a flow of milk; in a quarter of an hour, or perhaps in less time.

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The breast is provided with several ducts or small tubes, which serve to convey the milk through the medium of the nipple to the infant as it sucks; the substance of the nipple is cavernous and spongy. There are in these canals frequent dilatations, or cells, which hold a quantity of milk, ready for use at a proper time. Thus the infant obtains its food by drawing it gently from the receptacle or reservoir through the ducts and nipple; and this it can do, if not prevented by disease.

S E C T. III.

Diseases from Obstructions, &c.

ANY obstruction, whether of the gland or duct, is capable of producing a disease; and if we examine to what this obstruction owes its rise, it will lead us to consider, that when the child is born, the milk comes gradually into the breast, or reservoir; at first in small quantities, but generally sufficient for the support of the child, independent of other food; and where custom does not influence the mother to act contrary to the laws of nature, this obstruction will seldom be met with, and the child will be properly supported:—On the other hand, if the child be not put to the breast before
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the third day, the breast becomes full and turgid, and more or less painful; at this time, as it is not at all uncommon for little hardneſſes and indurations to appear, the child is unable to draw forth the milk; and other means muſt be made uſe of. The milk, they ſay, muſt not be ſuffered to abide in the breasts, for it will turn ſour, curdle, and inflame,—from hence abſceſſes, ſcirrhi, cancers, &c. are to be dreaded;—to prevent further miſchief, a woman muſt be hired to torment the unhappy patient by drawing the breasts; and thus, in my opinion, a real diſeaſe is produced by endeavoring to prevent an imaginary one.

S E C T. IV.

Drawing the Breasts.

AS the ſecretion of the milk, when not ſufficiently kept under by early ſucking, muſt dilate the veſſels, and they at firſt, unaccuſtomed to the increaſed capacity, will be ſenſibly affected, and according to the conſtitution of the woman, will be more or leſs uneaſy; ſo when completely filled, it is not at all ſurpriſing that pain ſhould be felt: The queſtion now is,—will the drawing of the breasts alleviate this pain, and afford the eaſe required? I have not found that it would; at

least it is very precarious, and the abscesses and fevers I have known ensue, urge me to think the practice much more pernicious than useful. On the contrary,—I speak and write from my own experience,—I never saw the omission either directly or indirectly prejudicial.

Were the breasts not touched during this state of fulness, hardness, or inflammation, but the whole suffered to subside, which would happen in a few hours, the child might then be put to the breast safely enough. It is not the delay which causes the mischief, but the application of too great force in drawing the breasts, or putting the child to suck at an improper time, when the breasts are in that irritable state, and so susceptible of inflammation.

If the child cannot be put to the breast on the first day, or before the hardness comes on, let the suckling be delayed until the hardness disappears.

It is not any coagulation of the milk that causes the obstruction, (for I do not think such coagulation ever is produced) but some foreign or external injury, such as, drawing the breast, heated rooms, hot and stimulating liquors and medicines,

medicines, &c. which produces inflammation, or increases a very small degree of irritation to a fever, abscess, &c.

When the breasts are full and distended from the confined milk, as before described, the violent or unnatural force applied, not unfrequently produces fever, or abscess, or both: It is very well worth our while to consider, that milk flows in proportion to the quantity drawn; this maxim is, I believe, indisputable.—Another maxim, equally true, though not so much thought of, is, that as often as the breasts are emptied of their milk, fresh milk will be secreted in its place, and that by drawing, the breasts never can be so emptied, as not to receive a fresh supply. This even when attended with the best success.

When the breasts are not drawn, nor the child suckled, the milk will be re-absorbed in the general circulation, and this at any time. Women who have children born dead seldom find their milk troublesome, and others are known to suckle children for two, three, or four years together.

Thus then, I think I write from attentive observation and experience, drawing the breasts in this state of irritability is the chief occasion of milk-fevers and abscesses: I would not dare

dare to say the only one; but this I may venture to affirm,—
I never met with one, where the breasts were not drawn, or
had not received an external injury.

To prevent accidents, what is then to be done,

1. When the child is to be suckled;
2. When the child is not to be suckled?

To the first I answer, let the child be put to the breast as soon as it shews a desire, which will be in less than twelve hours after delivery, perhaps within an hour, without giving it any food previous to the breast. The quantity of milk to be obtained is trifling, but trifling as it is, it is adapted to the purpose, and affords the infant nourishment sufficient for its age. At any time when the nipples and breasts are not uneasy, painful, or inflamed, the child may suck without fear; but if omitted till the breasts become uneasy, or inflamed, every effort of the child's sucking will add to the mother's torment, deprive her of rest, and most probably increase the disease.

Objection. But suppose, that the proper time of putting the child to the breast is past, that the breasts are turgid, uneasy, and throbbing, from the quantity of milk therein contained,

tained, and tending apace to hardness and inflammation,—its size considerably increased, and the swelling reaching to the arm-pit:—all these symptoms arise merely from the quantity of milk.—Now is it not a known maxim in physic, that by removing the cause, the disease is removed also?—Is it not a most natural and rational method to effect the cure then by lessening the quantity?—And to do this, what bids so fair as drawing the breasts?

To this objection I answer,—That while the breasts are free, we find the milk secreted in proportion to the quantity drawn by the child; so should we find it here, if we could readily obtain ease for the patient; but it is very seldom, indeed, that is the case:—The vessels of the breast are at this time most exquisitely sensible, and irritable; and every violent effort will now increase the irritability, and produce inflammation, which, like wildfire, pervades the whole frame, and a fever is brought on, which, from bad management, may soon become dangerous, and even fatal.—At best, abscesses ensue, and the unfortunate woman blesses her stars, that the fever fell into her breast to save her life.

What is then to be done?

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I advise, to let the breasts alone, not on any account to meddle with them; the throbbing and fulness I have always found to depart in six, eight, or twelve hours at farthest, if not delayed by drawing, irritation, heat of the room, hot liquors, or cordial medicines.

But we are too late to prevent,—the mischief is already done, and the fever is come on.—The symptoms are, first, a cold shivering fit, succeeded by heat, a parched tongue, pain in the head, back, &c. thirst, and nausea. The symptoms will in general abate in a day or two, and by a critical perspiration the patient becomes well. But if the breast still continue to be drawn, and the patient be treated with cordials and stimulants, instead of diluents, the disease is invited to continue: a trembling of the hands and tongue, and urine not depositing a sediment, indicate a continuance of the disease, and even threaten danger. The drawing of the breasts will aggravate every symptom, and totally prevent sleep; danger comes on with hasty strides, and death too often closes the tragic scene.

The drawing of breasts is too commonly considered in a favourable light, and meets with too great a degree of sufferance and approbation. I am apt to think, only for want of due

due consideration. When the milk is drawn violently, some vessels or ducts much more readily yield forth the milk than others; a small degree of violence will often produce inflammation, rupture some vessels, and produce obstruction in others; the secretory duct will pour forth the milk, but the diseased duct cannot give it a passage; the milk is accumulated in some cell or cells, and the disease becomes an abscess. The symptoms accompanying, will be violent pain in the breast, shiverings, fever, &c.

What is to be done?—At the beginning would it be right, or ought we to resolve this abscess, if we could?—To this I answer, I would recommend only such applications as may not disturb the animal œconomy. I am a very great enemy to all stimulating or heating applications, whether under the name of drawing, or suppurating plasters, or cataplasms. I am not fond of discutients, nor any internal medicines but the most mild. The application I have most generally made use of, has been the Saponaceous Cerate; sometimes this will resolve the obstruction, and the milk will be re-absorbed.—When this is not the case, and suppuration ensues, a puncture with a lancet, without giving great pain to the patient, will afford a discharge to the contained matter, and the application of a very few plasters will in general effect a cure.

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Will a puncture be sufficient?—I answer perfectly:—The part which first errs is exceedingly small, and when the contents are discharged, it contracts into its original size, and soon recovers its due tone. And this I have hitherto found to be the case in other abscesses: Flesh removed by the knife can never be replaced by the Surgeon.

Poultices are generally recommended, but I believe in this case they have no advantage over the Saponaceous Cerate; in this situation they are troublesome to keep on, and must be frequently renewed, else they will grow sour, and prove pernicious, whereas the Cerate has every good effect of a poultice, without its inconvenience.

Secondly, When the child is not to be suckled.—It has been, I think, observed, that where the child is not suckled, one woman in ten will be afflicted with an inflammation in the breast, under what is supposed to be the best management. I am by no means an advocate for mothers not suckling their own children when they can; but many cases may happen in which it is inconvenient or improper to give suck. I have always recommended the same advice, to do nothing at all to the breasts, and I have never found any accident from that advice; no harm has ensued, but every thing relating to
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the breasts has gone on well; the milk has been secreted and re-absorbed. The breasts may swell with milk, may throb, and become painful; but this pain, throbbing, and swelling, will subside, if not hindered, without other assistance than the direct course of nature, and that in a very few hours, without subsequent mischief.

Applications of spirits I highly disapprove, and think I have more than once found mischief proceed from their use; nor indeed do I at all like plasters to repel, which at best do no better than nature, unaccompanied, will perform, and too frequently, I fear, perform less, or do worse.

I will grant, that drawing the breasts, when they are not in a state of irritation, or tending to inflammation, is attended with little or no pain;—but surely, a child will suck as much milk as the mother can afford; and if the child be dead, or not suckled, why keep the milk flowing? No injury will happen, if let alone; but from violence and injudicious management, I shudder at the consequences, and I appeal to every advocate for the practice, whether a matter, in which the constitution is so intimately concerned, ought to be entrusted to ignorance, perhaps disease.

But that women suffer no pain in drawing, when the neglect of early sucking has accumulated the milk, so as to distend the breasts, and bring them into a state of irritation or inflammation, is far, very far, from being the case.—Here pain will be found a constant and immediate symptom, followed by restlessness, trembling, &c.

If any additional force be made use of while the breast is in this state of distention, inflammation, local or general, will generally be the consequence; and this will be more or less alarming, according to the irritability of the patient's constitution.

I am even apprehensive, that from this very matter has been produced the disorder called the Perpetual Fever; a disease which has engaged the attention of men of very great abilities, but seems now hardly elucidated; I have known every disagreeable symptom attending a fever (of irritation rather than inflammation) brought on by drawing the breasts, and in many instances they have vanished on the drawing being omitted, which in all cases I have never failed powerfully to advise, and I can recollect no instance which can in any degree induce me to alter that opinion.

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In feverish and other disorders, which may attack women that suckle, the case may require a separation of the child from the breast: In a case of this kind, I would by no means suffer a foreign aid to be called in. I should be very sorry to presume too far, or judge too rashly; but from many instances I have invariably found, that the omission of the drawing, and the leaving the breasts to nature, have never been attended with the least ill consequence; whereas, when put in practice, I have known every symptom to succeed that partial pain can produce, such as, want of rest, anxiety, nausea, loss of appetite, &c.

In all cases where the breasts are free from pain, and not distended with milk, there will certainly be little or no occasion to make use of these means to draw it out: and where the breast is painfully distended, and the vessels in a state of irritation or inflammation, it is dangerous to attempt it.

I could produce numberless cases in support of what I have asserted, collected from more than twelve years extensive practice, but they would probably answer no other purpose than to swell what I wish to comprise in as small a compass as possible; for if what I recommend is not attended to, cases brought in evidence will be very liable to be disputed. I will
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even now doubt of my opinion, if arguments arising from experience can be produced on the other side of the question; if any gentlemen can declare, from their own knowledge, that the simply leaving the breasts to nature, without drawing, or without medicines either external or internal, has been productive of abscess or inflammation. But experience, careful experience alone, can induce me to think that practice wrong, which has been uniformly prosperous.

I would never wish to behold the lying-in chamber an hospital for the sick, but rather a retreat from fatigue to recover the exhausted strength produced by the pains of labour, and gently accustom the mother to the care of the new friend and comfort Heaven has bestowed, before its capability of being exposed abroad; and to perform this, many, much abler pens than mine have been employed; but as this subject seemed to escape the notice of at least such as have fallen under my observation, I have ventured to pen this advice for the use of mothers only, as it is the result of a large and attentive experience, unbiaſſed by prejudice, and supported by ſucceſs.

T H E E N D.



